August 1, 2012 (Chicago)—Ethiopians, Americans of Ethiopian origin, and friends of Ethiopia mourned on Saturday the untimely death of Late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi who died August 20, 2012, and unanimously vowed to carry on his impressive legacy that spanned nearly four decades of public service—twenty one years of which as prime minister. More than 450 people attended the memorial service that was held at the heart of Chicago.

Representatives from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Protestant and Muslim religions took turns to pay tribute to late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, and consoled the mourners by citing verses from the Holy Bible and the Holy Quran, respectively. They extended condolences to the family of the late Prime Minister and to the Ethiopian people in general.

Members of the Chicago Ethiopian Community presented poems and gave touching speeches on the life of Prime Minister Meles. Selam, a young girl from Wheaton, brought the mourners into profound tears when she proclaimed, “We will put Meles’ legacy in the tablet of our hearts.” A moving poem, narrated by a young boy from Chicago, reinforced the people’s determination to embrace Meles’ legacy and to realize his vision—to see a peaceful and prosperous Ethiopia. Haile Berhe, a childhood friend of Meles, described the late Prime Minister as, “an avid reader who had broad knowledge on all subject matter.”

Judging from the people who attended the memorial service, the untimely death of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has brought sadness to many who are not necessarily members of the Ethiopian community. A case in point; representatives from the Eritrean community and the South Sudanese community read messages of condolences and affirmed their solidarity with the Ethiopian people. The South Sudanese said,” Meles was our brother and friend through thin and thick of our people’s struggle for freedom, and we trust Ethiopia more than any other country.” Likewise, the representative from the Eritrean community offered this: “Peace loving Eritreans equally mourn the death of Prime Minister Meles with you. The outpouring of grief from all sections of the Ethiopian society, which I witnessed on ETV, shows how much the prime minister was loved and admired by his people.”

The Mayor of Chicago Rahm Emanuel has also offered condolences to the Ethiopian Community in Chicago in particular and the Ethiopian people in general. The Mayor praised the late Prime Minister’s legacy. The Resolution letter was read by the Chair of the Memorial Service Organizing Committee Befekadu Retta. It will also be sent to Ethiopia via the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington, DC, after it is adopted by the city council on September 12, 2012.

In closing, Befekadu Retta reminded us that we have to redouble our efforts in helping our country, Ethiopia, if we want Meles to be proud of us. “If we love Meles,” he says, “We have to stop the grief right now and start working towards the realization of his vision for Ethiopia.” Amen to that!!

May God rest Meles Zenawi’s soul in peace.

Memorial Service Organizing Committee,